

Integrating Primary and Secondary Data in Regional/Local Labor Market Analysis

Background

Many states are now encouraging local workforce development entities (e.g., local workforce boards, community colleges) to conduct comprehensive and ongoing analyses of regional and local labor markets to help guide workforce development initiatives. States provide these local workforce development entities with a wide array of data from existing federal and state data sources. They also encourage local entities to supplement this secondary data with additional primary research conducted in local and regional labor markets. In doing this, states face two issues:

- ❑ Methods and Quality of Regional/Local Primary Research and Data Collection. What guidance should be given to local workforce development entities on how to collect local/regional information? What methods should be promoted and what are acceptable and leading practices (e.g., employer vacancy surveys)? What are the appropriate tradeoffs between quality, time, and cost in conducting this primary research? What is good enough in conducting focus groups, surveys, and employer interviews?
- ❑ Integrating Primary and Secondary Data. What guidance should be given to local workforce development entities and how to integrate this primary data with existing secondary data including both traditional labor market information (e.g., industry and occupational projections/trend data) and transactional and performance data (e.g., placement/retention data, job listings, new hire data)? How should this information be aligned, weighted and reconciled? When should primary data override or outweigh traditional secondary data (e.g. projected job openings)?

Topics for Discussion

1. Secondary Data Sources. What are the major types of secondary data resources that states are providing and/or encouraging/requiring local entities to use in regional/local labor market analysis?
 - ❑ Industry and occupational projections (new jobs and job openings)
 - ❑ Industry employment and payroll trend data (e.g., ES 202, CBP, CES)
 - ❑ Industry-occupational staffing pattern data
 - ❑ Local employment dynamics (LED) data
 - ❑ Commercial business establishment data
 - ❑ New hire data
 - ❑ Public system supply data (graduates from public programs)
 - ❑ State/regional wage survey data
 - ❑ Occupational information (e.g., ONET)
 - ❑ National/state skill standards
 - ❑ Program/provider performance data (e.g., placement and retention)
 - ❑ Job listings (state job-matching systems)
 - ❑ Others (e.g., industry association projections/surveys)?

2. Primary Research Methods and Quality Issues. What are the major types of primary research/data collection are states promoting or requiring? How is the state promoting or requiring high quality data collection? How can states encourage the participation of business and industry to improve the quality of primary research and data collection?

Primary Research Methods:

- ☐ Employer surveys (e.g., vacancy surveys)
- ☐ Employer/industry focus groups/advisory groups
- ☐ Employer interviews (e.g., business retention programs)
- ☐ Community/worker surveys
- ☐ Others?

Quality Issues:

- ☐ Coverage and sampling
- ☐ Timing
- ☐ Questions asked
- ☐ Consistency in data collection
- ☐ Others?

Promoting Business and Industry Participation:

- ☐ Convening and engagement
- ☐ Incentives

3. Integration of Primary and Secondary Data. What are the major challenges and leading practices facing states in integrating primary and secondary data for making and approving regional/local decisions?

- ☐ How should local entities integrate primary and secondary data in regional/local plans (e.g., demand plans)?
- ☐ How should states guide local entities in weighting or reconciling primary and secondary data in defining market trends and needs (e.g., IT and nursing shortages)?
- ☐ What data quality issues should be considered in integrating primary and secondary data?